

Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN *En Español*

March 7, 2007

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Mr. Lopez. Thank you for speaking with us. And my first question is about your trip. You're going to Latin America, the longest trip an American President has taken to the region. Why now? Why at this moment when Democrats control the Congress and there are issues that might be in their hands?

The President. Well, thank you for asking that question. This is not my first trip since I've been the President. I have been in—traveling the neighborhood, I think, maybe three other times. But this is a long trip, and the reason why is, I want to remind people throughout our neighborhood that America cares about them. And I bring a message of hope, a message that says, we care about the human condition and a message of accomplishment.

I don't know if you know this or not, but since I've been the President, our bilateral aid to Latin America has increased from 800 million to 1.6 billion. And the reason I say that is, the American taxpayer has been very generous about providing aid in our neighborhood, and most of that aid is social justice money—in other words, it's money for education and health.

And yet we don't get much credit for it. And I want the taxpayers, I want the American people to get credit for their generosity in Central and South America.

Jenna Bush

Mr. Lopez. Your daughter Jenna is writing a book about her experiences in Central America. She will be focusing on a single mother with HIV. Has she been part of your eyes and ears in the region now that she's been there for quite a while?

The President. Well, she is—first of all, I'm very proud of her. She is an accomplished woman. She came back—I haven't seen a lot of her because she's been spending a lot of time in Central America as a UNICEF volunteer—but she came back and talked to me about this young girl that she has befriended. And she's deeply concerned

about alienationists in our world, and is going to try to raise some money to help the education programs there.

To me, her book and her example is what America is all about. We've got compassionate people, and when we find suffering and see income disparity or see poverty, we'd like to help people lift themselves up.

Trade

Mr. Lopez. You've talked about the importance of free trade. Opponents of free trade in Latin America say it's one-sided and favors the U.S. Opponents of free trade in the U.S.—

The President. That's right.

Mr. Lopez. —say it's one-sided and favors those countries. So who's right, and what are you trying to do with this right now?

The President. They're both wrong. The opponents of free trade are wrong, in my judgment, because free trade—a good free trade agreement—and those agreements are signed by administrations and ratified by their elected assemblies—fair trade agreements are beneficial to both, and that's what we want.

All you've got to do is look at the trade between the United States and Mexico after the free trade agreement we signed between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. And the amount of trade has gone up appreciably, significantly.

And I truly believe that one of the most effective ways to eliminate poverty is through free and fair trade. But there's no question, there's protectionist sentiments in the neighborhood and in our own Congress. And I—we got the CAFTA vote by one vote in the House of Representatives, and I'm going to have to work hard to get more free trade agreements through. But the fact that it's hard won't deter me from doing what I think is right.

Mr. Lopez. They say you're exporting American jobs.

The President. Well, that's what Americans say. I look at it differently. I think what we're doing is, we are creating opportunities for business people, small-business people, to be able to sell products in other markets, whether it be U.S. products into Central America or South America and vice versa.

I also know that trade enhances the wealth of all people. I mean, it is in our interests that Mexico generate wealth so that people can make a living. If you're a person deeply concerned about immigration—and as you know, this is a hot issue here in the United States—doesn't it make sense to encourage trade so that people can find a job at home rather than feel compelled to try to find work elsewhere?

And trade is—you can track the success of a trade agreement—and I repeat again, the success of the trade agreement with Mexico.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Brazil

Mr. Lopez. Brazil, you're going. Ethanol seems to be at the top of the agenda. How important is this ethanol? Some analysts say that you will bring Brazil closer to the U.S., you will develop ethanol plants in Central America and have ethanol for U.S. consumption.

The President. First of all, the alternative fuel issue is a huge issue for the United States. I mean, we're too dependent on oil. It's in our national security interests and our economic security interests and for environmental concerns to develop alternatives to gasoline. Ethanol is the—is what we're investing a lot in here in the United States to do that. Brazil has been very successful, so it gives us common ground to talk.

I like the idea of helping Central America, by the way, develop an ethanol industry. I think it would be good for their national security and economic security interests. But my discussion with Brazil is more than just ethanol. Brazil is a very important country in South America. We will be talking about the Doha round of global trade. I'll be talking with my friend President Lula about international matters. Brazil is an international player, and the United States looks forward to working with Brazil to promote peace.

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Mr. Lopez. Are you—is free trade—is this trip a way to show what the U.S. is doing and counter what other leaders might be doing? For example, Hugo Chavez, who

called you the devil and says many things, said he will be in Argentina on Friday.

The President. The trip really is to remind people that we care. I do worry about the fact that some say, "Well, the United States hasn't paid enough attention to us," or, "The United States really isn't anything more than worried about terrorism." And when, in fact, the record has been a strong record.

And I will be going to promote—to look at programs that are—have benefited from the generosity of the American people. And so it's—I say, our country is a compassionate country. And there's significant connections between people inside America and people outside America. And it's in our interest that we promote those ties, and we promote—and I remind people about the generosity of our country.

It's not a given, by the way, that people will continue to spend—that the Congress will spend money. And therefore, it's important for me to show that we're not only spending money but the effects of spending money, the positive things that are happening as we help elevate people's lives.

Verdict in the Trial of I. Lewis Libby

Mr. Lopez. Mr. President, I want to ask you about the conviction of Lewis "Scooter" Libby. Your critics are saying that his conviction makes the promise that you made to bring honor and dignity back to the White House, that this promise will go unmet.

The President. Yes, first of all, this was a lengthy trial on a serious matter, and a jury of his peers convicted him. And we've got to respect that conviction.

Secondly, this is an ongoing legal matter. In other words, there's more legal procedures to take place, and at this time, it's inappropriate for me or the administration to be issuing comments about this serious matter.

On a personal note, I was sad. I was sad for a man who had worked in my administration, and particularly sad for his family.

Situation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Mr. Lopez. As Commander in Chief, what do you say to the veterans who have gone through a very hard time at Walter Reed and

other hospitals? There are commissions, there are solutions that are being proposed. But, what do you, as Commander in Chief, say to those veterans in——

The President. I say, anything other than excellent care is unacceptable. And I've been to Walter Reed a lot. There's some fantastic doctors and nurses and healers. And yet we found that there was some substandard care in part of that organization, and we're going to correct it.

And I put the Commission together—a series of commissions, to make sure that there—that we fully understand the truth, fully elevate the problems, so we can solve them.

I had Bob Dole and Donna Shalala in today. They're Chairmen of this very important Commission I put together that will analyze the care our soldiers get from the battlefield into the Defense Department, then into the Veterans, and then into community. And I want to make sure there is—that is a seamless transition of excellent care.

Mr. Lopez. *Muchas gracias, Señor Presidente.*

The President. *Por nada.*

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:06 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil; I. Lewis Libby, former Chief of Staff to the Vice President; and Bob Dole and Donna E. Shalala, Cochair, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Mr. Lopez referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Executive Order 13427—Extending Privileges and Immunities to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations

March 7, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 7(b) of the Department of State Authorities Act of 2006 (22 U.S.C. 2881), I hereby extend to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York,

and to its members, the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the diplomatic missions of member states to the United Nations, and members of such missions, subject to corresponding conditions and obligations.

This extension of privileges and immunities is not intended to abridge in any respect privileges or immunities that the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York and its members otherwise may have acquired or may acquire by law.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 7, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 8, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on March 9.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 8, 2007

On March 15, 1995, by Executive Order 12957, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Iran pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran. On May 6, 1995, the President issued Executive Order 12959 imposing more comprehensive sanctions to further respond to this threat, and on August 19, 1997, the President issued Executive Order 13059 consolidating and clarifying the previous orders.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 15, 1995, must continue in effect beyond March 15, 2007. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)),